

The Branch Library of Medicine Münster created a tablet toolbox for embedding mobile digital learning resources into the curriculum

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Abstract

The Branch Library of Medicine of the University of Münster recently finished the iPad lending project *easyphysikum*, where 250 undergraduates got an iPad Air for loan equipped with every learning resource to pass the preclinical exams. The project showed, that a digital mobile learning infrastructure represent an added value compared to traditional ways of learning. In May 2015 the library escalated the project to make it available to all students of medicine.

Key words: tablet computer; iPad; curriculum; medical education; medical library.

Introduction

We live in a digital age. Within ten years, printed journals have been replaced totally by electronic ones at our library. A similar development can be seen with academic books as scholarly monographs are accessed and supplied more and more as e-books. Even the textbooks for medical education are no longer sacrosanct. Our belief is that multiple choice tools and textbooks will merge to a new e-learning platform. The future replacement of the printed textbook – one of the most important library services – is becoming more real every day. With the projects *easyphysikum* and *easystudium*, the Branch Library of Medicine of the University of Münster, Germany, is actively monitoring and pushing the transition process.

Projects

With *easyphysikum*, the Branch Library provided 250 2nd-year undergraduates with a mobile digital learning infrastructure. The aim was that each student could access all learning media needed to pass the preclinical exams with tablet computers everywhere and at any time (1). Tablet owners could download these resources on their own tablet; all other students were given an iPad Air for 5 months, which was equipped with these resources (“Tablet Toolbox”).

The project was examined by online surveys, focus groups (champion user) and standardized interviews. It could be shown that digital textbooks on tablets represent an added value compared to printed books. The combination of a mobile device, educational content, course organization and document sharing build a novel digital learning environment that was highly attractive and useful for students (2).

After an excellent scoring of *easyphysikum* by the students (88% satisfaction rate) (3), the project was escalated in May 2015 to 1,000+ students of medicine in Münster (www.easystudium.de). The number of iPads tripled to almost 200 and the value of the offered content to 3 Million Euro. Preferably financially weak students got an iPad. The maximum loaning period was 1.5 years. For all other students, the learning resources were provided for free on their own tablets or laptops. The use of all learning media on a mobile device, which are needed for the study of medicine, allowed the independence of students from specific venues and times such as the library and its opening hours. In addition, the learning materials could be annotated and shared with other students. These features make the students more secure and were experienced as a kind of relief. The two projects helped students, the

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university, and the library to better cope with the challenges of the mobile, digital environment.

Conclusion

The project helps us to get to know our users better. This is important because only about one in three students still visits the library regularly. The information needs of the remaining two thirds are hardly known. With *easystudium* they can be addressed personally and attracted to the other services of the library. The library is now much more open to the communication and working methods of the digital natives, which helps us to stay relevant for this group and be more grounded in their awareness. To reach this goal, the library staff was equipped with iPads to acquire expert knowledge for digital, mobile devices and media.

Due to the importance of printed textbooks in the service portfolio of academic libraries, it is extremely important for libraries to know if and how a transition to digital media is happening. The project found some frames of this process and therefore could be of help to libraries who wish to be prepared for that transition. Several universities, libraries and faculties at home and abroad have been keen to

build similar projects, as shown by numerous inquiries.

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